The Astrobiology Field Guide

Daniella Scalice
Education and Public Outreach Coordinator
NASA Astrobiology Institute
MS 240- 1 NASA Ames Research Center
USA
dscalice@mail.arc.nasa.gov

Krisstina Wilmoth
Assistant Director for Communications and Technology
NASA Astrobiology Institute
USA

Professional researchers have a lot in common with kids. The idea of exploration, better yet, of expedition, sends visions of Indiana Jones repelling down a cliff and Sir Edmund Hillary trekking up a pure white slope at 25,000 feet careening through their minds' eyes, and inspires them to want to hit the trail "in search of…" The goal of the Astrobiology Field Guide project is to engage 'students of all ages' with the ongoing field expeditions of today's astrobiologists as they explore the ends of the Earth searching for clues to life's origin, evolution, and distribution in the Universe.

Using global satellite data visualization software, the NASA Astrobiology Institute (NAI) is crafting a prototype of this Field Guide. It will focus on one astrobiology research site - The Pilbara in Western Australia, an internationally recognized area hosting the best known example of the earliest evidence of life on Earth - a stromatolitic chert precipitation in the 3.45 Ga Warrawoona Group. From a global view of the Earth, users will zoom down to the outcrop scale in the Pilbara where they will interact with multimedia elements revealing the research and astrobiological relevance of the area.

Future expansions of the Field Guide could include many more astrobiologically relevant areas across the globe such as Licancabur in Chile, the Rio Tinto in Spain, and Yellowstone National Park in the US. For now, the prototype serves as an initial point of discussion with the informal education community (museums, science centers), to engage their expertise and ideas for usability, need for such a product, and feasible expansion plans.

Visualize your field site and research coming to life in this product! Contact Daniella Scalice at dscalice@mail.arc.nasa.gov to get involved…